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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 003149

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (VAN CLEVE)

EMBASSY VATICAN MESSAGE NO. 89/001

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06//12/11

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [XF](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND PAPER FOR PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: MEPP

CLASSIFIED BY CDA JOSEPH MERANTE, REASONS E.O. 12958 1.5  
(B), (D).

1. (C) BELOW IS DRAFT EMBASSY VATICAN BACKGROUND PAPER  
FOR POSSIBLE VISIT BY PRESIDENT BUSH TO THE VATICAN.

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THE VATICAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS  
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2. (C) THE VATICAN'S POSITION ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE  
PROCESS HAS EVOLVED SUBSTANTIALLY OVER THE LAST THREE  
YEARS. FOR MANY YEARS, THE VATICAN CALLED FOR THE  
"INTERNATIONALIZATION" OF JERUSALEM, BUT IN THE LATE '90'S  
THE POSITION CHANGED TO THE "INTERNATIONALIZATION" OF  
JERUSALEM "INTRAMURA" (WITHIN THE WALLS). MOST RECENTLY,  
ON THE ISSUE OF JERUSALEM THE VATICAN MOVED SUBSTANTIALLY  
IN A DIRECTION WHICH CAN BE SEEN AS CONSTRUCTIVE. IT HAS  
DROPPED THE CALL FOR INTERNATIONALIZING ANY PART OF  
JERUSALEM AND IS NOW ASKING THAT THE SHRINES OF THE THREE  
RELIGIONS PRESERVE THEIR UNIQUE AND SACRED CHARACTER  
THROUGH "INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES", IN SUCH A WAY THAT IN  
THE FUTURE "NONE OF THE PARTIES WILL BE ABLE TO CLAIM FOR  
ITSELF EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OF THESE SACRED PARTS OF THE  
CITY". SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CITY WOULD BE A MATTER FOR THE  
ISRAELIS AND THE PALESTINIANS TO NEGOTIATE.

3. (C) DESPITE A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE STAND ON THE FUTURE OF  
JERUSALEM, THE VATICAN'S TILT TOWARD THE PALESTINIAN SIDE  
OF THE CONFLICT HAS BEEN MORE EVIDENT IN THE WAKE OF THE  
MOST RECENT VIOLENCE. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE  
EXPLANATIONS TO THE INCREASE IN OVERT SYMPATHY FOR THE  
PALESTINIAN CAUSE. IT REFLECTS IN LARGE PART THE VATICAN'S  
NEED TO MIND THE INTERESTS OF THE PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS.  
ONE OF THE VATICAN'S WORST FEARS IS A JERUSALEM DEVOID OF  
CHRISTIANS. THE VATICAN HAS BEEN ALSO TELLING EMBASSY

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VATICAN THAT IT BELIEVES IT NEEDS TO SHORE UP YASSIR  
ARAFAT, AS IT IS CONCERNED WITH WHAT DIRECTION THE  
PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT WILL TAKE AFTER ARAFAT LEAVES THE  
SCENE (I.E. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM). THE PERCEIVED TILT  
MAY ALSO REFLECT RESIDUAL ANTI-SEMITIC ATTITUDES THAT STILL  
EXIST AMONG SOME WITHIN THE VATICAN. FINALLY, IT COULD  
ALSO BE THE RESULT OF POLITICAL MANEUVERING BY PRIME  
MINISTER SODANO AS HE ORGANIZES HIS CAMPAIGN FOR THE  
PAPACY. A PRO-PALESTINIAN STANCE IS POPULAR AMONG  
CARDINALS FROM THE THIRD WORLD.  
MERANTE

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